

Appreciations by  
United Original Seceders

JOHN KNOX

1905

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First known Portrait of Knox

*(From Beza's Icones, 1580).*

# JOHN KNOX:

Appreciations by

*UNITED ORIGINAL SECEDERS.*

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## ADDRESSES

Delivered at the Meeting of Synod held in Edinburgh  
on the 18th of May 1905.

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For sure the Lord will not cast off  
those that his people be,  
Neither his own inheritance  
quit and forsake will he :  
But judgment unto righteousness  
shall yet return again ;  
And all shall follow after it  
that are right-hearted men.

## Prefatory Note.

• • •

**J**OHAN KNOX—CHRISTIAN, REFORMER, and PATRIOT—was born about four hundred years ago. The quater-centenary of his birth, whatever the precise date may have been, is being celebrated this year throughout our land, and far beyond its bounds. It would ill become the Secession Church, of which his great biographer, M'Crie, was a distinguished ornament, to stand aloof from such a movement, which commemorates the great work that the Lord enabled him to accomplish for the cause of Christ in Scotland and elsewhere.

Considering that the commemoration affords a fitting opportunity for calling the attention of our countrymen to Reformation principles now sadly

neglected, rather than in a spirit of hero worship, the Synod devoted the evening of the 18th May to addresses on subjects relating to the life and work of our great Reformer. A committee was intrusted with the publication of the addresses, and they are now issued in the hope that some may be led to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way," and that others may be encouraged and confirmed in their attachment to them.

The addresses speak for themselves ; and we trust that many who had not the opportunity of hearing them delivered may receive instruction and stimulus from the perusal of them. Each of the speakers treated his theme in his own way and on his own responsibility. The result is a comprehensive presentation by competent men of the various aspects of the subject to which the evening was devoted.

Knox well deserves to be remembered by all who love the cause he served so well. He sought the conversion to God of those who had hitherto been slaves of sin and Satan, and would not have been

satisfied with a reformation of a merely external and formal character. The views he entertained of truth and duty were of the highest kind ; and in the prosecution of his work he showed profound spiritual knowledge of the sacred oracles, and great skill in the application of their teaching.

It was his earnest desire that the nation should be on the Lord's side, and in order to this he sought to make adequate provision for the preaching of the gospel and for the godly education of the young. He was thwarted in his efforts in these and other directions by the selfish opposition of the nobles and of the Court, with the result that even yet his educational policy has not been fully carried out.

Knox has all along had many virulent and unscrupulous enemies doing their utmost to injure his character and to depreciate his work. Even in this twentieth century such persons are to be found ; but the verdict of history is against them. Unbiassed students appreciate him as a man of fervent piety, sterling uprightness, burning zeal,

and great enlightenment. Fearing God, he had no other fear. The fruit of his pious, self-denying, earnest work in the cause of God will continue long after the very names of his traducers and calumniators shall have passed into oblivion. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

GEORGE ANDERSON.

GLASGOW, *June 1905.*






## Opening Address.

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• • •  
REV. THOMAS MATTHEW, *Moderator*,  
KILWINNING.

FATHERS AND BRETHREN AND OTHER FRIENDS,—

 I CAN assure you that I count it not the least of the honours conferred upon me through occupying the Moderator's Chair this year, that I have been called upon to preside on an occasion like this, and to take some little part in doing honour to our great Scottish Reformer. All Scotland is honouring him—at least, all that is best and most truly Scottish in Scotland—on this the quatercentenary of his birth, or at anyrate what we have all agreed to treat as its quater-centenary, although, as Dr. Hay Fleming and others have pointed out, there are strong reasons for questioning the ordinarily-accepted date. That, however, is not a matter of prime importance. The essential thing is that John Knox was born within this realm some 400 years ago, and was the chosen instrument in God's hand for restoring his country's faith and laying the

foundations of his country's liberties, and so lifting this little land of ours from the rear into the very van of human progress. Monuments to Knox have been erected in various parts of the country, and every Presbyterian Church and public school may fittingly have his name inscribed upon it; but one may truly say that all Scotland is his monument: and if the time were ever to arrive that we become tired of the present name of our country, no more appropriate one could be given it than Knoxland. But whether we give him the name or not, Scotland is indeed Knoxland. Under God he was the maker of modern Scotland.

Now, fathers and brethren, while all Scotchmen have a share in John Knox, and all Presbyterians even throughout the English-speaking lands are bound to honour his memory, it seems to me that we Original Seceders have a special share in him, and are under more than ordinary obligations to recall his work and reverence his name. We cannot forget on such an evening as this—we rather rejoice to remember—that the man whose name is inseparably associated with Knox, and we feel persuaded, will go down with his to the latest generation, as that of his ablest, most judicial, and most





Rev. Thomas M'Crie, D.D.

*Knox's Biographer.*

sympathetic biographer, was an Original Seceder. When Dr. Thomas M'Crie took in hand the "Life of Knox," the Reformer was far from being fully appreciated by his own countrymen, even by those of his own faith. Calumnies had gathered round his name and darkened his memory. Ignorance and misrepresentation combined had presented him to the popular imagination as little else than half-boor, half-fanatic, whose speech and conduct were only to be excused by the prevailing barbarism of a barbarous age. M'Crie gave the death-blow to all such conceptions. He let the light of truth in upon his hero, and with strong and loving hand wiped away the aspersions that had been cast upon him. But he did more than this. He succeeded in presenting such a portrait of our Reformer that, with almost universal consent, he now stands in the very foremost rank of the patriots and benefactors of his country—one of the only two Scotchmen that Thomas Carlyle has thought worthy of a place among the "heroes" of the world. If Knox's own prophetic words have been and are being signally fulfilled—"What I have been to my country, although this unthankful age will not know, yet the ages to come will be compelled to bear witness to the truth"—their fulfilment has been due to the

character and writings of the first Dr. M'Crie more than to those of any other man. And if others fail to award the biographer the meed of praise that is certainly his due, we in this Synod must be all the more forward to weave a crown for his head, along with the larger and brighter one we are weaving for the head of him who was the illustrious subject of his literary masterpiece.

But we are not met here to-night, as I take it, merely to eulogise any of our fellow-creatures, however eminent—fellow-creatures who owed all the good that was in them to the grace of God, and who delighted to trace their every achievement to the workings of that grace. “Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,” was one of Knox’s favourite texts, with which he fought and conquered the enemy of souls on his death-bed. And I think if he were here he would say to us, “Don’t praise me, but praise the Master who was pleased to use me as a fellow-worker with Himself in setting up His kingdom upon earth, and especially in this realm of Scotland.” Our meeting, then, is to call to mind the goodness of the Lord in giving to our native land, some four hundred years ago, such a precious gift as John Knox, and to impress more deeply upon ourselves and others



the value of that gift. Its primary aim is to awaken gratitude, and to strike to a loftier note our psalms of thanksgiving for ourselves and for our country. But it is also designed to awaken a sense of responsibility, and to intensify that sense wherever it exists. Knox accepted certain principles at the root of which lay this:—"The supremacy of Holy Scripture in the regions of doctrine and worship and discipline and government." These principles he fearlessly applied in the face of every opposing influence. And it is certain that if he had not done so, the civil and ecclesiastical history of our country would have worn a different colour and complexion. Scotland would have developed in other and less worthy directions than those in which it has developed. If, then, we are convinced that Knox was right—for truth is as eternal and unchanging as its Author—let us hold fast the faith which he held, and not be ashamed to own the principles by whose application he won for us the blessings of the Reformation. Like the good James Renwick, the last of those that were honoured with a public execution in this city of Edinburgh in the cause of "Christ's Crown and Covenant," let us continue to declare ourselves "OF OLD JOHN KNOX'S PRINCIPLES." It is better surely to follow

the example of the prophets than to garnish their sepulchres. There are tendencies at work in this land of ours, and that, too, in Churches which trace their origin to Knox, which, unless arrested, will lead inevitably back into the superstition and idolatry from which Knox delivered us. These tendencies have shown themselves contemporaneously with the open abandonment of some of Knox's principles. Is it possible for any thinking person not to conclude that there is more than a casual connection between the two? The lesson on the face of it to us and to others is: "*Obsta principiis*," Resist the beginnings. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

I feel persuaded, then, that if our great Reformer were permitted for a little while to leave his heavenly mansion and to re-visit these scenes of his former labours and trials and triumphs, he would recognise his nearest spiritual kindred, not perhaps in the men who occupy the buildings in which he preached and prayed, but in those that hold his principles most tenaciously and apply them most consistently—who act, in short, on the motto that regulated his public policy and his private life, "*To the law and to the testimony* ; if they speak not according to this word,

it is because there is no light in them." May we all strive to prove ourselves among the number of such!

And now, fathers and brethren, let me conclude by expressing my own gratification, and yours also, I am persuaded, with having as the three chief speakers of the evening men who are more than ordinarily competent to handle the subjects which have been entrusted to them. We have first of all the able and energetic Secretary of the Scottish Reformation Society, who is well known as an enthusiastic historical student, and who will be completely at home in dealing with "The Dawn of the Reformation in Scotland." Then we have Dr. Hay Fleming, who has long been recognised as occupying a place in the very foremost rank, if not the very foremost place, among authorities on Scottish Church history. No living man is better able to tell us the exact truth about "The Life and Work of Knox." And, in the third place, we have the Rev. Alexander Smellie, of Carlisle, the eloquent and cultured author of "Men of the Covenant" and other well-known works, who will gather up for us "Some of the Lessons Taught by the Life and Labours of the Great Reformer." And, with such men to address us, I

think I may claim that the larger Churches around us, with their thousands of ministers and ten thousands of members, could not provide three abler or more capable speakers for such a meeting as this. I am sure we shall all be instructed and delighted by what they have to say.



## The Dawn of the Reformation.

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• • •

REV. JOHN STURROCK,  
EDINBURGH.

**T**O-NIGHT, as a Synod, we take our humble share in gratefully commemorating the great things done for our land in and by that glorious Reformation, in the effecting of which John Knox was the leading instrument whom God employed. While the occasion of such a service is the occurrence of the 400th anniversary of the Reformer's birth, the special object we have in view is not to glorify a man, however worthy of being remembered and honoured, but to celebrate the distinguishing goodness and favour of God toward us as a people, in raising up such a man just when he was needed, in fitting him for his life-work, and in enabling him to accomplish the gigantic task that was laid to his hand.

We have no sympathy with, and would give no countenance to, that species of silly hero-worship so frequently practised in the extravagant celebrations of certain men of genius, irrespective of their character and the tendency of their much-belauded works. And still less would we be thought to favour the superstitious practice of observing saints'-days—one of those very evils against which our thoroughgoing

Reformers directed their opposition so strenuously and so successfully. But seeing it has been divinely written that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," it is surely both dutiful and becoming to seize, from time to time, suitable occasions to speak in admiring and grateful terms of those who have been honoured of God to render signal service to His cause and to their country's highest welfare, and who have thus made all succeeding generations their everlasting debtors. In gratefully remembering His instruments and acknowledging their important labours, we but honour that God who raised them up, and made them what they were, and enabled them to do what they did, and to achieve the success which at length crowned their efforts; and we desire to unite with all our fellow-countrymen in recording our indebtedness to His mercy and in rendering hearty thanks and praise to His great name.

The title of this, the first of three short papers to be submitted on this interesting occasion, is "The Dawn of the Reformation," and this naturally leads us to think first of the night of moral and spiritual darkness upon which the light of the Reformation at length began to break in the sovereign good providence of God. That night, as history shows, was a long and dismal one, extending from about the close of the 11th century, when the old Celtic Church began to be suppressed and the corrupt Papal Church



to take its place, under the influence of Malcolm Canmore's superstitious Queen, whose Romanising efforts were so zealously followed up by her like-minded sons. Prominent among these was King David, "the sair sanct for the croon," who built and enriched so many of the abbeys and monastic establishments, and by whom the celibacy of the clergy was established, which soon proved one prolific source of those terrible evils that ere long came to flood the whole land. During the four centuries or thereby which preceded the Reformation things went gradually on from bad to worse, especially in the ecclesiastical sphere, until, in the half-century immediately before the much-needed change took place, our poor country had reached a state of moral degradation which had landed it among the lowest and most despicable in Europe. The ignorance and superstition and moral corruption of every kind which then prevailed among all ranks and classes in society, both in Church and State, were such as to render Scotland a very byword among the nations.

When her much-loved King, James IV., fell on the fatal field of Flodden in 1513, along with so many of the bravest and best of her nobles and the flower of her peasantry, it was indeed a woeful and ominous day for Scotland, and the serious consequences which followed well-nigh brought the little kingdom to ruin. "But," as a writer on the subject

has well put it, “deplorable as was the state of temporal affairs at this period, the state of religion was still worse. There was more cause to weep in bitterest anguish over the moral and spiritual condition of the Church and people, than over the disasters of Flodden. The night of Popish ignorance and superstition had now reached its darkest. All light of religious knowledge and life seemed to be quenched, and there remained only certain rude forms of religious observance, little respected by any, and, by not a few, treated with contempt. ‘Darkness covered the land, and gross darkness the people.’ It was a period of great crimes, committed sometimes in revenge of personal and family wrongs ; sometimes in the mere wantonness of lust and power, and often for purposes of spoliation. The remorse of these crimes haunted the conscience and drove the perpetrators, on their death-bed, to make confession and seek absolution. A selfish and unscrupulous priesthood took advantage of this guilty fear, and pictured before the mind of the dying sinner the awful horrors of purgatory through which he would have to pass, unless he made the only reparation in his power, by bequeathing a large portion of his lands and riches to the Church for pious uses. In this way the clergy attained great wealth, by which their order was at once aggrandised and corrupted to such a degree that their greed, ambition, and profligacy became

a common byword. As might be supposed, matters went ill with the people. Uninstructed and uncared for by their spiritual guides; without a Bible, often without even the form of religious observance, save in the shape of priestly exaction in connection with births and burials; and with such an example set before them by those whom they had been taught to reverence as the ministers of God, they sank into deep ignorance, gross superstition, and flagrant immorality."

In confirmation of such testimony on the subject of our country's debased condition and consequent need of reformation, let me quote a few sentences from another most competent witness, Knox's first and greatest biographer, Dr. M'Crie—*nomen clarissimum in hac ecclesia*. "The corruptions by which the Christian religion was universally depraved before the Reformation had grown to a greater height in Scotland than in any other nation within the pale of the Western Church. Superstition and religious imposture in their grossest forms gained an easy admission among an ignorant and rude people. By means of these the clergy attained to an exorbitant degree of opulence and power, which were accompanied, as they always have been, with the corruption of their order and of the whole system of religion. The full half of the wealth of the nation belonged to the clergy, and the greater part of this was in the hands of a few of their

number, who had the command of the whole body. . . The bishops never on any occasion condescended to preach ; indeed, I scarcely recollect an instance of it mentioned in history, from the erection of the regular Scottish episcopacy down to the era of the Reformation. . . The lives of the clergy, exempted from secular jurisdiction, and corrupted by wealth and idleness, had become a scandal to religion and an outrage upon decency.

“Through the blind devotion and munificence of princes and nobles, monasteries, those nurseries of superstition and idleness, had greatly multiplied in the land ; and though they had universally degenerated, and had become notoriously the haunts of lewdness and debauchery, it was deemed impious and sacrilegious to reduce their number, abridge their privileges, or alienate their funds. The kingdom swarmed with ignorant, idle, and luxurious monks, who, like locusts, devoured the fruits of the earth and filled the air with pestilential infection.

“The ignorance of the clergy respecting religion was as gross as the dissoluteness of their manners. Even bishops were not ashamed to confess that they were unacquainted with the canons of their faith, and had never read any part of the sacred Scriptures, except what they met with in their missals. Under such pastors the people perished for lack of knowledge. The book which was able to make wise unto salvation,

and was intended to be equally accessible to all, was locked up from them, and the use of it in their native tongue was prohibited under the heaviest penalties."

Much more to a like effect might be adduced from reliable sources, but enough has been said to bring before our minds afresh the almost incredible condition into which both religion and morality had sunk, under the deadly incubus of the Papal power, in the early part of the 16th century. It seemed to be, indeed, the very hour and power of darkness in our land. But as in the natural night the darkest hour is said to be before the dawn, so did it prove in this moral night of superstition and spiritual bondage. Just when the gloom was deepest, some streaks of light began to appear here and there on the dark horizon, heralding the approaching day. Man's extremity and the Church's extremity have often proved God's opportunity for signal working; and so, when things were at the worst, and to the eye of sense all hope seemed to be cut off, signs of something better began to show themselves, and to indicate that a time of relief and deliverance was drawing nigh. Already there were growing up here and there throughout the land men whose hearts God had touched, and whom He was training to be used as His witnesses and instruments when the proper time for action should arrive. And meanwhile there were influences of various kinds quietly operating among the people,



both of high and low degree, all tending to produce dissatisfaction with the prevailing state of things, and to make ready a way for the gospel, and the blessed change it was destined to effect when proclaimed by those whom God was preparing for this work, and who were to seal it with their blood.

As might be expected, where there was any sense of the fitness and unfitness of things still remaining in men's minds, the very enormities that were so flagrantly perpetrated in name of religion by its professed ministers could hardly fail to awaken thoughts and questionings of a serious kind. And the result was that not a few came to be shocked and scandalised by what they witnessed, and began to cherish anything but favourable feelings toward those who were openly prostituting the sacred offices, with which they claimed to be invested, to purposes of selfish ambition and sensual indulgence of the grossest kind. "Such feelings," as one has so well expressed it, "gradually found expression, now in sly hints and insinuations, now in pointed proverbs, now in gross lampoons and biting sarcasms, and ultimately in plays, which were openly recited at their merry-makings, sometimes even in presence of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries as well as of the King and the Court; till at length the clergy, the Church, and the sacred rites became the staple themes of the punster, the ballad-monger, and the



satirist. And the natural effect soon followed. The clergy, as a class, and the rites of religion as administered by them, lost their hold upon the reverence and love of the people, and the sentiment took possession of the public mind, that a state of things so false and rotten could not and should not be endured."

Along with the wholesome state of feeling so produced, there were other influences of a higher and better nature brought to bear upon the public mind with the best results. Tidings of what the brave Martin Luther had done in breaking with Rome, and of what he was continuing to do in preaching the doctrines of justification by faith, and a free salvation by the grace of God in Christ, and so emancipating a long enslaved people, were wafted from time to time to our shores, and quickly spread throughout the land. And better still, Luther's writings, and those of others like-minded, and above all the Book of God in the language of the people, in the form of Tyndale's New Testament, were secretly imported from the Continent, and found their way into the hands of those able to make use of them, who read them not only for themselves, but also to their uneducated neighbours. As early, we are told, as 1526, such precious wares were brought by trading vessels to the ports of Leith, St. Andrews, Montrose, and Aberdeen. They

were eagerly sought after, and were read and discussed in the Universities, in the merchant's home and the baron's hall, and even in the peasant's hovel; and by not a few the saving doctrines taught were quietly embraced and believed. Thus did it come about, in the wonderful orderings of divine providence, that from about the year 1520 onwards there was awakened through Scotland a deep dissatisfaction with, and hostility to, the existing state of religious matters, accompanied with an earnest hope and longing for something better to take its place. As one has expressed it, "The first faint streaks of morning light were beginning to gild the mountain tops, and even to steal into the valleys, awakening the hope of coming day. All, however, was as yet only in a state of vague and longing expectancy—men waiting and looking wistfully for the breaking of the day, in some earnest living voice to give emphatic utterance to the prevailing discontent, and to announce the way and means of deliverance."

God's word having found its way into men's hands, and God's life-giving Spirit beginning to move in men's hearts, it was not long till more than one living voice was heard earnestly proclaiming the truth that maketh free, and pleading for much-needed reform in a corrupt Church. And so interest now gathers around and centres mainly in those

heroic men whom God at this crisis raised up to be His witnesses, and whose names will ever shine in the pages of history, as, in a sense, the morning stars of the Scottish Reformation.

And the first to appear was the noble Patrick Hamilton, whose brief but brilliant career was speedily ended in the flames of martyrdom. Born probably near Glasgow, about the year 1504, of illustrious parentage, with royal blood in his veins, Hamilton was, like so many younger sons of noble families, destined to the service of the Church, and was, at an early age, appointed Titular Abbot of Ferne, in Ross-shire. About the same time he was sent to the University of Paris, where he took his degree in 1520. While prosecuting his studies there he came into contact with Lutheran students, and through intercourse with these and the study of the Reformers' writings he became familiar with the great controversy that was being waged so strenuously in Europe against the Papacy, and appears to have imbibed something of the spirit and teaching of the gospel. In 1523 he returned to Scotland, but, instead of assuming his official position at the Abbey of Ferne, he proceeded to St. Andrews in order to prosecute further his studies; and, while there, is said to have been admitted to priestly orders. The chief reason, it is stated, why he took this step was, that he wished to have full ecclesiastical

authority to preach, which he could only obtain in this way. But, though he entered the priesthood, he never assumed the monastic habit—monkish hypocrisy being a thing which he hated. Soon the preaching of such an one—so young and so earnest—attracted much attention; and news of what was going on ere long reached the ears of James Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, who summoned the youthful preacher to appear and answer certain charges of heretical teaching preferred against him. Though anxious to do the work of an evangelist in proclaiming the truth as he knew it and had experienced its power, he was not yet prepared to act the nobler part of a martyr, and seal his testimony with his blood. So, instead of boldly facing the Primate, he withdrew to the Continent, finding his way to Germany, where he met such men as Luther and Melanchthon and Lambert of Marburg, from whom he learned the way of God more perfectly. At length he had so imbibed their heroic spirit of faith and devotedness that he felt constrained to return to his native land, and there openly and fearlessly proclaim the whole truth of God, let the consequences be what they might. Accordingly in the late autumn of 1527, after an absence of six months, Hamilton found himself again in Scotland, much in the spirit of the great Apostle when he said, “And now I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not

knowing the things that shall befall me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." At once he laid himself out for this great work of testifying, and ample opportunities were soon given him by men and women thirsting to hear the word of life. "The bright beams of the true light," says Knox, "which by God's grace were planted in his heart, began most abundantly to burst forth, as well in public as in secret." And, says another historian, "Wheresoever he came, he spared not to lay open the corruptions of the Roman Church, and to show the errors crept into the Christian religion; whereunto many gave ear, and a great following he had, both for his learning and courteous demeanour to all sorts of people."

What the burden of Hamilton's message to his fellow-countrymen was we gather from the famous *Theses* he had put forward and defended while at Marburg, and of which an English translation was published by Firth, and was reproduced in "Foxe's Book of Martyrs," under the quaint title of *Patrick's Places*. "This work," says Dr. Fleming, in his admirable Handbook—"The Scottish Reformation"—



“is valuable as the earliest doctrinal production of the Scottish Reformation, and also as Hamilton’s doctrinal manifesto. Though his *Theses* were prepared for academic discussion, the earnest practical piety of the Reformer runs through them like a thread of silver.” And says Lorimer, Hamilton’s learned biographer, “In that little tract we come into communion with the very soul and spirit of his brief but fruitful ministry. He preached *faith* in Jesus Christ to his countrymen, as the living root of hope and charity. He aimed at a reformation of the National Church which began at the root, not at the branches. It was by making the root of his country’s religion and life good that he expected to make the tree good and its fruit good. And his hope did not deceive him. The preacher himself, indeed, was soon silenced and cut off, but his doctrine lived after him, and wrought with a leaven-like virtue in the nation’s heart, till it leavened the whole lump.”

While such decided conduct on the part of one so illustrious for his learning, his piety, and his eminent social position, did not fail to produce a deep impression, especially upon people in the higher ranks of society, it filled with alarm those in power in the Church, who were determined to put down all Lutheran teaching, as it was styled, and keep things as they were. And accordingly the Primate, on hearing how Hamilton was again acting, resolved

to silence him, and at length he succeeded only too well in his crafty and cruel design. After being treacherously encouraged by those in power to give free expression to his views in St. Andrews, Hamilton was suddenly summoned to answer to a charge of heresy. Alive to his imminent danger, some of his friends urged him again to save his life by flight; but this he resolutely refused to do, declaring that "he had come thither to confirm the minds of the godly by his death as a martyr to the truth, and to turn his back now would be to lay a stumbling-block in their path, and to cause them to fall." At his trial he calmly and fearlessly avowed the truth which he believed and taught, maintaining that Jesus Christ was the sole Mediator between God and men—that there was no such place as purgatory mentioned in the Bible—and that the blood of Christ could alone purge men's souls from sin. The result was that he was pronounced guilty of damnable heresy, and was condemned to be burned at the stake that very day. And the dread sentence was carried out before any efforts could be made by his influential friends to rescue him. For six long hours did the brutal work of burning by means of faggots and gunpowder go on, during which no sign of impatience or anger was ever shown by him; and the last audible words of this valiant proto-martyr of the Scottish Reformation were these—"How long



shall darkness overwhelm this realm? How long wilt Thou suffer this tyranny of men? Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

By this swift and terrible blow Beaton hoped to strike terror to the hearts of the friends of reform, and lay an effectual arrest on the spread of Lutheranism. But it had the very opposite effect. It led men to think and inquire, with the result that many came to be satisfied that Hamilton died a martyr's death, and espoused the cause for which he had suffered, thus again illustrating the saying that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. This tragic event, which, like so many others, shows the wicked persecuting spirit of Popery, took place early in 1528; and when, four years later, the pile was being prepared to burn Henry Forrest, upon a prominent spot at St. Andrews, so that the flames might be visible from the shores of Angus, a witty friend gave this advice to the Archbishop, "My lord, if ye burn any more, except ye follow my counsel, ye will utterly destroy yourselves. If ye *will* burn them, let it be in *howe* cellars; for the reek of Master Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon."

For twenty years after the cruel martyrdom of this noble and youthful witness for the truth, the dawning, struggling cause of the Reformation experienced many ups and downs—seasons of brightness and hope being followed by times of gloom and

despondency. Largely through the influence of the writings of Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, the secret contempt of the people for the clergy and their ways was kept alive and deepened. But those at the head of affairs were powerful and unscrupulous men, and the martyr-roll was once and again augmented, as when (soon after Henry Forrest) Norman Gourlay, a priest, and David Stratoun, a gentleman of distinction, were, in August 1534, led to the stake at the rood of Greenside; and Edinburgh witnessed for the first time a tragic sight which she was destined to see often repeated, before the sufferings of the nation should work out its final emancipation from Papal thralldom.

When David Beaton, Abbot of Arbroath, was appointed co-adjutor to his uncle in the Primacy at St Andrews, the fears awakened in the breasts of the Reforming party were sadly realised. The Cardinal was a man of boundless ambition, iron will, and ruthless spirit, who would brook no opposition in the carrying out of his purposes. So the martyr piles were again lighted, and early in 1539, on the Castlehill of Edinburgh, other five men were mercilessly done to death for their fidelity to the faith of Christ. As one result of such tyrannical and murderous procedure, more of the nobility now openly espoused the cause of Reform, and the Cardinal saw that, if he was not to

be baulked, and if the Church was to be saved, he must, as he expressed it, "not only strike heavily, but strike high," and get rid, if possible, of these heretical nobles and gentry. So, emboldened by his success, he ventured to lay before the King, who was sorely in need of having the royal treasury replenished, a list of over a hundred of these gentlemen, and advised that they should be forthwith arraigned and condemned, and have their whole estates confiscated to the Crown. The King shrank from giving his consent to such an atrocious proposal, and it was not carried out; but "the fact," as has been remarked, "that such a proposal was submitted shows the great progress which the Reformation had made among the higher ranks at this early period, and to what desperate measures the Popish party were prepared to resort in order to arrest it."

On the death of James V. at the end of 1542 (soon after the birth of his daughter, with whom, by and by, Knox had so much to do), important changes took place. Beaton failed in his ambitious attempt to secure the Regency, the Earl of Arran being preferred. And Arran's first acts as Regent were full of promise for the infant cause of reform, prominent among these being the holding of a Parliament early in 1543, by which several measures were passed favourable to the Reformation. One of these measures, which gave great satisfaction, was an Act

making it lawful for the people to possess and read the Holy Scriptures in English or in their mother tongue.

Arran, however, ere long proved faithless to the cause with which he was supposed to be identified, and dark and trying days again came upon its true friends; and the need of some one of Patrick Hamilton's spirit to stand prominently forth as the popular champion of the Reformed faith was everywhere deeply felt. And at this momentous crisis, in the wonderful providence of God, the needed man again appeared in the person of George Wishart, who has been described as an "eminent scholar, a profound divine, an eloquent preacher, and a man of saintly piety and indomitable courage." Like so many others, Wishart had been driven into exile by the enemies of the gospel; but in 1543 or 1544 he returned and began to preach at Montrose—the place where he had formerly gained a high reputation as a teacher of the Greek language. And from that time on to his death, a few years later, he bravely kept aloft the banner which had fallen from the hands of the martyred Hamilton, and laboured in season, out of season, all over the country, in the cause of the gospel and of civil and religious liberty. And when at length in 1546 he fell, as another victim to Papal tyranny, on the martyr's blazing pile before the Castle of St. Andrews, and beneath the gloating eyes

of his foul murderer, Cardinal Beaton (so soon to have stern retribution measured out to him), the brave and gentle Wishart handed on the standard he had so nobly borne, untarnished, to his valiant friend and successor in the great conflict, John Knox. By him it was destined to be carried forward to victory, in the complete overthrow of the Papal antichrist in our land, and the establishment of that Reformation in Church and State to which, under God, we owe all those priceless blessings we have as a nation so long and so fully enjoyed. All honour to the great and good men who fought so valiantly and successfully the battles of our country's civil and religious liberty: they laboured, and we are entered into their labours: they suffered, and we enjoy in peace the blessed fruits of their sufferings. God grant that we who are the children of those who obtained their freedom at such a great price may ever prove faithful to the high and sacred trust that has been transmitted to us, and that we may never, never cease to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.



## The Life and Work of Knox.

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D. HAY FLEMING, LL.D.

**M**ANY Scotchmen deserve to be held in grateful and everlasting remembrance by their fellow-countrymen, but none more so than John Knox. Some have toiled, and some have fought, as unweariedly, as incessantly, as unselfishly, for the civil, the social, the moral, or the spiritual welfare of the race as he did ; and not a few have suffered more in the struggle and conflict, for, although he endured much, he died neither on the scaffold nor at the stake, but passed away peacefully in his own bed. His pre-eminence rests on a broad and solid basis. He sought both the material and the moral improvement of the people. He was a patriot as well as a religious reformer ; and took a wide and statesman-like grasp of things. Narrow in some of his notions he undoubtedly was, if tried by the standard of the twentieth century ; but his ideals were certainly not narrow, and some of them were far in advance of his age, and have not been surpassed even in ours. In his own time he endured reproach as well as persecution, and the voice of calumny and slander has not yet been hushed. He,

at least, ran no risk of incurring the woe pronounced against those of whom all men speak well.

While it is only right and becoming that those who have reaped advantage from the labours and far-seeing policy of Knox should continue to honour and respect him, it may be questioned whether this is the proper time to celebrate the quater-centenary of his birth. I, for one, do not believe that it is. So long ago as 1644, David Buchanan emphatically declared that Knox was born in 1505; and ever since Buchanan's time that has been accepted as the correct date by almost every writer who has referred to the matter. He gives, however, no authority for it; and, to me, it seems perfectly clear that when he wrote he had the MS. of Archbishop Spottiswoode's History before him; and he may have blindly followed it. Spottiswoode's statement is that Knox died "in the sixty-seventh year of his age." By deducting sixty-seven from 1572 (the year of his death) 1505 is obtained as the year of his birth; and it is quite likely that Buchanan arrived at the date by this simple process. Spottiswoode was only seven years old when Knox died, and Buchanan does not seem to have been born until long afterwards. Neither of them therefore can be regarded as a contemporary authority. Beza, who wrote in 1580, that is, only eight years after Knox's death, says distinctly that, at his death, he was fifty-seven.



Matthew Crawford, the first editor of a genuine edition of Knox's History, regarded this as an error, and Dr. M'Crie referred to it as a mistake of ten years. Had Crawford and M'Crie known of the letter which Sir Peter Young wrote to Beza in 1579, they would have hesitated before they adopted the statements of Spottiswoode and Buchanan on the point. This letter was first published by Dr. Hume Brown; and in it Young informs Beza that Knox died in his fifty-ninth year. If, as this implies, he had attained fifty-eight, then he may have been born in 1514, whereas Beza would make him a year younger still. Had Beza coincided exactly with Young, the inference would naturally have been that he had simply adopted his date; but, as he differs by a year, it may be supposed that he had received more precise information from Lawson, Knox's colleague, who, Young said, was sending him a full account of our Reformer. Young, in his own letter, not only gives Knox's age, but describes his personal appearance. He speaks of his hair as black, and of his beard as black mingled with grey. Considering what Knox came through—the worry, the anxiety, and the actual suffering—one would not expect that his hair would remain black until he was sixty-seven.

For these, and *other* reasons, it seems to me much more probable that Knox was born in 1514 or 1515 than in 1505.

There has been considerable discussion as to the precise place of his birth. Claims have been eagerly made and pressed on behalf of the village of Gifford, of the parish of Morham, and of the suburb of Haddington known as Giffordgate. All the three are in East Lothian. The claims of Giffordgate are the strongest, and those of Morham the weakest.

Almost nothing is known of his youth and early manhood, beyond the facts that he was in priest's orders, and had acted as a notary under the authority of the Church of Rome. He first introduces his own name in his History of the Reformation, when speaking of George Wishart's preaching at Haddington in the winter of 1545-6. And he states that he had waited carefully on Wishart since he came to Lothian. How he waited on him he incidentally explains when he describes his parting from him. Speaking of himself in the third person, he says:—"Johnne Knox preassing to have gone with the said Maister George, he said, 'Nay, returne to your barnes, and God blisse you. One is sufficient for one sacrifice.' And so he caused a twa-handed sward (which commonly was caryed with the said Maister George) be tackin fra the said Johnne Knox, who, albeit unwillinglie, obeyit, and returned with Hew Dowglass of Langnudrye. Maister George, having to accompany him the Lard of Ormestoun, Johnne Sandelandis of Caldar youngar, the Lard

of Brounestoun, and otheris, with thare servandis, passed upoun foote (for it was a vehement frost) to Ormestoun. After suppar he held comfortable purpose of the death of Goddis chosen childrin."

Before mid-night, Ormiston House was surrounded by the Earl of Bothwell, who arrested Wishart, and, contrary to his promise, handed him over to the Regent Arran, who in turn gave him up to Cardinal Beaton. By the end of January, Wishart was a helpless prisoner in Beaton's Castle at St. Andrews, and on the 1st of March he was led forth to the stake in front of it, that the Cardinal might luxuriously gloat over his dying agonies. Within three months, Beaton himself, or, as Knox calls him, "that bloody wolfe the Cardinall," was slain in his own stronghold, and his dead body slung ignominiously over the wall, to convince the incredulous inhabitants of St. Andrews that he was really dead.

The earlier writers say that Knox's eyes were opened by the study of the writings of Jerome and Augustine; and some of them allege that he got his first taste of the truth from Thomas Williams, a black-friar; but no one seems to have had so much influence upon him as George Wishart. Williams he has described as a man of solid judgment, of reasonable letters for that age, and of a prompt and good utterance, and of wholesome doctrine, though without great vehemency against superstition.

Towards Wishart, Knox ever cherished the warmest feelings ; and, after the Reformation was established, he described him as a man of such graces as had never before been heard of in Scotland, as singularly learned in godly knowledge and human science, and as clearly illuminated with the spirit of prophecy.

Those who had slain the Cardinal, in the summer of 1546, continued to hold his castle for their own safety, and many joined them there who had no connection with the Cardinal's death. Knox entered it in April 1547. From the reasons which he gives for doing so, it is learned that he was so weary of moving from place to place, to escape persecution, that he had determined to leave Scotland, and to visit the schools of Germany. Of England, he says, he had no pleasure then, because, although the Pope's name had been suppressed, his laws and corruptions remained in full vigour. The parents of the boys, however, to whom he had been tutor, urged him to go to St. Andrews, that he might have the protection of the castle, and that their sons might have the benefit of his teaching. This proved to be one of the great turning points in Knox's life.

When he entered St. Andrews Castle, he caused his pupils to give, in the parish church, an account of the catechism which he taught them. He also lectured to them on John's Gospel in the chapel of the castle. Those who heard him were so struck by

his matter and manner, that they tried to persuade him to preach. This he utterly refused to do, alleging that he would not run where God had not called him, meaning that he would do nothing without a lawful vocation. This seems to imply that he did not consider the orders he had received in the Church of Rome a sufficient warrant for preaching the Gospel.

His admirers in the Castle were not to be denied. After consulting Sir David Lyndsay of the Mount, they resolved to call him publicly. And so John Rough, after preaching on the election of ministers, and the power that a congregation has over any man in whom the gifts of God are espied, turned to Knox, who was present, and charged him, in the name of God and of Christ, and in the name of those who called him, to take upon him the office of preaching, if he wished to avoid God's displeasure, and if he desired that His graces might be multiplied upon him. Then, turning to those who were present, he asked—"Was not this your charge to me? and do ye not approve this vocation?" They answered—"It was, and we approve it." The result upon Knox can best be told in his own words:—"Whairat the said Johnne, abashed, byrst furth in moist abundand taeris, and withdrew himself to his chalmer. His conteanance and behaveour, fra that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself to the publick place of preaching, did sufficiently declair the



greaf and truble of his hearte ; for no man saw any sign of myrth of him, neyther yitt had he pleasur to accompany any man, many dayis togetther." Knox was not given to weeping, and the mere fact that he wept on this occasion shows that the matter touched him very deeply.

Dean John Annand, briefly characterised by Knox as "a rottin Papist," but otherwise known to have been an Augustinian canon and Principal of St. Leonard's College, had sorely troubled John Rough in his preaching. Knox had already helped Rough by his pen. Now he came to the rescue publicly in the parish church. His first text was in the 7th chapter of Daniel. The lives of several of the popes, and of their shavelings, were analysed, and the doctrines of the Church and its corruptions were assailed, with a vigour and a thoroughness unprecedented in this country. He likewise proved from the Scriptures that man is justified by faith alone, and that the blood of Jesus Christ purges us from all sin, whereas the Papists attribute justification to the works of the law, yea to works of man's invention, "as pilgremage, pardonis, and otheris sic baggage." Among his hearers were John Major and the other luminaries of the University, as also John Wynram and many of the Augustinian canons, and some friars both black and grey. At the end of his discourse he challenged them to criticise his proofs. The people

were astonished. Some said that he would be burned. Hitherto the Scottish Reformers had only tried to “snead the branches of the Papistrie”; he struck boldly at the root to destroy the whole.

Soon afterwards, in public discussion, he maintained that man could neither make nor devise a religion acceptable to God, but is bound to observe the religion received from God, “without chopping or changing thair of;” that the sacraments ought to be ministered as instituted by Christ and practised by His apostles, nothing being added or diminished; and that no religious ceremony was pleasing to God unless it was commanded in the Scriptures. Thus he laid down the principle which he afterwards emphasised, and which is the very kernel of Puritanism.

Protestantism made such progress in St. Andrews that Knox dispensed the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. This has been referred to as the first occasion on which it had been celebrated in Scotland after the Protestant manner; but Petrie affirms that Wishart had previously dispensed it at Montrose.

A fleet of French galleys arrived in St. Andrews Bay. The batteries it brought were so powerful, and so skilfully handled, that the defenders of the Castle had to capitulate. This was at the end of July 1547. Knox had warned them that this would come to pass. Their corrupt life, he said, could not escape punishment from God.



The inmates of the Castle were carried off in the galleys as captives, and Knox was taken with them. He was now to learn by cruel experience what it was to be a galley-slave, under the whip of a tyrant, and chained to a bench. His health gave way, and he seemed to be dying. The galley had again returned to St. Andrews Bay. One of his companions bade him look towards the land, and asked him if he recognised it. "Yes," he replied, "I knaw it weall; for I see the stepill of that place, whare God first in publict opened my mouth to his glorie, and I am fullie persuaded, how weak that ever I now appear, that I shall nott departe this lyif, till that my tounge shall glorifie his godlie name in the same place." This remarkable prediction, or persuasion, was remarkably and amply fulfilled eleven years afterwards.

After nineteen months of bondage Knox was released from the galleys. He went to England, where the pious and amiable Edward the Sixth was proving that he was indeed a reforming king.

In his first interview with Mary Queen of Scots, Knox said to her:—"In England I was resident onlie the space of fyve yearis. The places war Berwick, whair I abode two yearis; so long in the New Castell; and a year in London." Though he thus summed up his work in England in few words, the work he did there was important and abiding. He was appointed a royal chaplain; and he helped

to revise the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England. He objected to communicants kneeling while receiving the elements of the Lord's Supper; and it was due to his action, and to his influence, that the rubric in the English Book of Common Prayer was introduced, which explains that the kneeling does not imply adoration of the elements, and that the bread and wine remain in their natural substances, and that the adoration of them is idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians. This rubric is hateful to Anglican High-Churchmen.

The good King Edward died on the 6th of July 1553. It was nearly eight months afterwards before Knox left England. He sailed to Dieppe, and, after a short stay there, passed through France to Switzerland. In May he was back again in Dieppe, and said that, in the interval, he had travelled through all the congregations of Helvetia, and had reasoned with all the pastors and many other excellently learned men. He afterwards ministered to congregations of English exiles at Geneva, and at Frankfort-on-the-Maine; and in Dieppe he did much for the cause of vital religion.

His services in St. Andrews, his sufferings in the galleys, his experiences in England, his travels on the Continent, his sojourns in Geneva and in Frankfort, all helped to train and ripen him for the great work of his life—that work which dates specially from the 2nd

of May 1559, when he arrived at Edinburgh. Next day he wrote, "I see the battell shall be great, for Sathan rageth even to the uttermost ; and I am come (I praise my God) even in the brunt of the battell ; for my fellow-preachers have a day appointed to answer before the Queene Regent, the 10th of this instant, wher I intend (if God impede not) also to be present, be life, be death, or els be both, to glorifie his godlie name, who thus mercifully hath heard my long cries."

The Church of Dundee had been reformed before his arrival, and the brethren were assembled there to discuss their future proceedings. He joined them. On the 10th of May, the preachers who had been summoned to appear at Stirling were condemned in absence as rebels, and outlawed as fugitives. Next day in his sermon at Perth, Knox was "vehement against idolatrie." After his service was ended, and most of the people had left, a priest proposed to celebrate mass. A boy protested against the idolatry. The priest gave him a blow for his pains. The boy threw a stone at the priest, and broke an image. This acted like the proverbial spark on gunpowder. The onlookers laid violent hands on the altars, images, and ornaments ; and such was their capacity for work of this kind that, before many of the inhabitants of Perth knew what was taking place, every object savouring of idolatry in the great church of St John was utterly destroyed.

When the common people found that nothing was left in the church on which to wreak their indignation, they sacked the monasteries.

The Queen Regent was enraged and threatened to burn the town, and sow it with salt. She was informed that, unless the threatened persecution were stayed, the Congregation would be compelled to defend themselves by the sword. As her forces marched to Perth, the Protestants gathered from all quarters to help their brethren. She was alarmed, and began to negotiate. An agreement was made. The Congregation left Perth, and the Queen Regent entered it; but the Earl of Argyll and Lord James Stewart (afterwards the Regent Murray) left her, and openly joined the Protestants, because, as it was alleged, she failed to keep her part of the agreement.

Some of the leaders now went to Fife. Knox went too. He preached at Crail and Anstruther, and intended to do the same at St. Andrews. When Archbishop Hamilton heard of this intention, he determined to prevent its being carried out; and was ready to oppose it with a hundred spearmen. Knox, however, was not to be deterred. God had first called him to the ministry there, and had brought him back to it in safety. He desired no man to protect him. He only asked for an audience. He preached on Sabbath the 11th of June, and the three following days, and the citizens were so moved

by his appeals that, with the concurrence of the magistrates, they cleared the Cathedral of its imagery and idolatrous objects, and burned them on the spot where Walter Mill, the last of the Protestant martyrs, had, in the preceding year, been reduced to ashes.

The General Provincial Council of the old Church, which had been held two months before, had resolved to remedy certain practical abuses; but now the work was taken out of its hands, and carried through much more expeditiously, and infinitely more thoroughly, than the reforming party inside the Church would ever have agreed to. Knox afterwards said:—"As tueching the doctrine taught by our ministeris, and as tueching the administratioun of sacramentis used in our churches, we ar bold to affirme, that thair is no realme this day upoun the face of the earth that hath thame in grettar puritie; yea . . thair is none . . that hath thame in the lyek puritie; for all otheris (how synceare that ever the doctrine be that by some is taught) reteane in thair churches, and the ministeris thairof, some footsteppis of Antichrist, and some dreggis of Papistrie; but we (all praise to God alone) have nothing withinoure churches that ever flowed frome that man of synne."

This result was not easily attained; and, under God, was mainly due to the unwavering firmness, the contagious zeal, and the almost superhuman efforts of Knox. Once and again, in the struggle



with the Queen Regent and her French troops, when the outlook seemed dark and hopeless, Knox raised the drooping spirit of the Protestants by his steadfast faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness. In the heat of the conflict he thus explained why he had so little leisure for correspondence:—"Time to me is so pretious, that with great difficultie can I steale one houre in eight dayes, ather to satisfie my self, or to gratifie my freinds. I have beene in continuall travell since the day of appointment [*i.e.*, for a period of six weeks] and notwithstanding the fevers have vexed me the space of a moneth, yitt have I travelled through the most part of this realme, where (all praise be to his blessed Majestie) men of all sorts and conditionns embrace the truthe." Again he writes:—"Trubles and labours ly upoun me, so that I feele some part of the case of these that before me have foughten against Sathan for deliverance of God's people." And again he says:—"In twenty-four hours, I have not four free to naturall rest. . . . I write with sleeping eis."

Even after the French troops were expelled by the help of the English, and after the Scottish Parliament had ratified the Confession of Faith and abolished the Papal power in this land, Knox's troubles and difficulties were not at an end. The Reformed Church of Scotland had to be built up, and strengthened against the attacks of open



opponents and the wiles of false or feeble friends. The ancient endowments of the Church, which he wished to secure for the maintenance of the ministry, for the education of the people, and for the support of the deserving poor, were coveted by the nobles and largely alienated to private purposes.

Knox laid great stress on preaching, and had a very high idea of the office and qualifications of the ministry. In the Confession of Faith, which he helped to frame in 1560, three notes are given by which a true church may be distinguished from a false; and the first note is—"the trew preaching of the Word of God." Ministers were very scarce in Scotland at that time; but he insisted that an incompetent minister was no better than an idol, and that it was better for a parish to be without a minister than to be saddled with an incompetent one. The First Book of Discipline, also drawn up in 1560, explains how ministers are not qualified, and how they are:—"It is neathir the clipping of thair crownes, the crossing of thair fingaris, nor the blowing of the dum doggis called the bischopis, neathir yit the laying on of thair handis, that maketh thame treu ministeris of Christ Jesus. But the Spreit of God inwardlie first moving the heartis to seke Christis glorie and the proffit of his church, and thaireftir the nominatioun of the people, the examinatioun of the learned, and publict admissioun . . .

make men lauchfull ministeris of the Wourd and sacramentis." Knox was himself a born preacher. He does not appear to have written his sermons, at least not usually ; but he threw his whole strength and soul into them ; and, when he was in the pulpit, he stirred the hearts of his hearers as the tempest stirs the sea.

A recent writer has said :—" With tender trust in God's goodness even to the guilty, John Knox would hold no parley." This charge is most unjust. Knox's own words are :—" This I trust will no man denie to be the popre office of all Goddes messagers, to preache . . . . repentance and remission of synnes. But neither of both can be done, except the conscience of the offenders be accused and convicted of transgression." How tenderly he could deal with those under conviction of sin is apparent from his letters to his mother-in-law. " Mother, wald ye not that Chrystis glorie suld appeir ? Gif in you war nether found syn, deth, weaknes, nor imperfectioun, what neid had ye of Chrystis benefittis ? Remember, mother, that Jesus the Sone of God came not in the flesche to call the just . . . . but he came to call synneris, not to abynd and reiose in thair auld iniquitie, but to repentance ; that is to ane unfeaned dolour for the offences committit, and to a daylie sorrowing, yea and haittred for that whilk resteth [*i.e.*, remaineth],

with a hoip of mercie and forgiveness of God by the redemptioun that is in Chrystis blude."

As the minister of Edinburgh, he occupied the position of a watchman, ever ready to give warning when danger appeared on the horizon. His difficulties were increased by the return of the fair Queen of Scots, who was so lavishly endowed with those charms by which men are bewitched. Many who were bitterly opposed to the Mass relented when they came under the spell of her fascination ; and Knox was regarded by her as the most dangerous opponent in Scotland to her schemes. Even after she fled to England, he had no rest between the rival factions by whom the country was torn in twain. For him, indeed, there was no rest, until his vehement spirit and frail body were separated by the gentle hand of death, on the 24th of November 1572.

Before the Reformation, Scotland was covered by an appalling cloud of ignorance. The ignorance extended even to those classes which ought to have been cultured. Priests there were who could not read their own language without stammering ; and nuns who could not sign their own names. The moral turpitude was even more appalling than the ignorance. The shameless lives of the clergy had depraved the people. By way of excuse for the clergy, it has been urged that the sense of morality was lower then than now. It was their duty, however,

to keep up the standard, and to raise it when it fell. If they did not know that gross immorality was wrong, their lack of knowledge was an aggravation, not a palliation, of their offences. That they did know that it was wrong is proved by the canons of their own councils. In the Catechism issued in 1552 under Archbishop Hamilton's authority, a high code of morality is laid down for the people's guidance, although the Archbishop himself was a dissolute scoundrel.

Knox and his fellow-labourers set themselves to raise the moral tone of the nation, by precept, by example, and by discipline. Their discipline was certainly very strict; but it was needed, and it was exercised with praiseworthy impartiality. Neither nobility of birth nor high position could exempt a transgressor. Knox and the other reformers knew, and kept in mind, that true reformation is a personal thing, and begins at the heart; but they also did much to elevate the people socially. They did not believe that ignorance is the mother of devotion; and the scheme of national education formulated in the First Book of Discipline, and usually attributed to Knox, has not yet been excelled in some respects.

It is sometimes alleged that Knox simply swept away one tyranny to replace it by another. He had a wonderful amount of charity for those who lived in darkness and in sin while the land was under the heel of the Papacy; but he had very little for


those who remained in darkness, or persisted in open sin, after the glorious Gospel was faithfully and widely preached. No doubt, stubborn Papists and inveterate sinners thought that he was trying to wreath a yoke around their necks. But any high-handed action on the part of the Reformed Church towards the obstinate was mild and tame, compared with the despotism of that system, which, in this country, was overthrown mainly by the labours and influence of Knox. The power, moreover, which was exercised by the Reformed Church of Scotland was not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of many, and these the representatives of the people. In some ways the Church of Knox was more democratic than any Presbyterian Church of the present day. Elders are now elected for life; and, consequently, an elder may sit in a presbytery, in a synod, or in a general assembly, as the representative of a congregation, although all the members of that congregation who voted for him have been dead and buried for twenty years. In Knox's time the elders and deacons were elected yearly; and the reason given for that was, "lest by long continuance of such officers men presume upon the liberty of the Church." In the words of Sir William Stirling Maxwell—"No man in England or Scotland who values liberty, national, civil, or religious, can speak of Knox without reverence and gratitude."



## The Legacy of John Knox.

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REV. ALEXANDER SMELLIE, M.A.,  
CARLUKE.

O us, who look back to him with thankfulness across the gulf of centuries, John Knox, it seems to me, has left a four-fold legacy. And every element in it is precious, and deserves to be cherished with pious reverence and care.

There is, first of all, the legacy of his BELIEF.

He was a man with a *credo*, a doctrinal system, a faith, which was clear-cut and decisive. He did not lose himself in wandering mazes. His mind abhorred vagueness and irresolution. In none of the spheres within which he played his strenuous part was he a trimmer, and, least, in the sphere of his religion. Always, after he passed into the light and liberty of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he was prepared to give a reason for the hope which was in him.

How shall we characterise John Knox's belief? What are the adjectives which portray it?



It is sensible and sane. The Scottish Reformation, like its sister Reformations, had its destructive as well as its constructive side. There was a great and motley crowd of superstitions, which it must drive from the land and from the souls of men; and nobody set about the task of expulsion with more zest than its undaunted leader. For the dogmas and practices of the Roman Church—transubstantiation, papistical indulgences, purgatory, pilgrimages, praying to departed saints—he had not a particle of tolerance. Sometimes his contempt is withering, and his sarcasm couches itself in language which our nicer and more scrupulous age may pronounce over-rough. In the preface to the report of his debate with the Abbot of Crossraguel, he laughs to scorn the Sacrament of the Mass. This “poore god of bread,” he says, is more miserable than the idols, over whose futility Hebrew prophets had made merry. Within one year, he will “putrifie, and then he must be burnt.” The wind will blow him to the sea; the rain or the snow will turn him into dough again. “Yea, which is most of all to be feared, that god is a pray (if he be not wel kept) to rattes and mise; for they will desyre no better denner than white rounde gods ynew.” It is pitiless, such sheer and vigorous common-sense. The glammers, the pretensions, the miracles of sacerdotalism and ritualism melt into nothingness when its search-light falls on them and its scalpel dissects them. But a

similar remorseless sanity might stand us in good stead in our modern day.

Knox's belief, however, has more positive virtues. It is Scriptural. Through and through it is based on the firm foundation of the Word of God. Protestantism has everywhere striven to vindicate and uphold and diadem the Bible, to set it in the foremost place and to keep it there. If, as has been alleged, she has produced fewer books of devotion than Catholicism, that is because her sons and daughters prize one incomparable Book of Devotion above all others, and find in it the wisest guidance and the holiest inspiration and the sweetest comfort. John Knox taught the Scottish people that they could not give the Bible an excessive honour or a too complete obedience. In the opening paragraph of his Confession, he lifts the divine oracles high above the humanly constructed creed; and he begs any one who notes, in what he and his colleagues have written, an article or sentence repugnant to God's Holy Word, to admonish them of it, in gentleness and for Christian charity's sake; and the dubious statement will be either explained or reformed. At the outset of *The Book of Discipline*, he affirms that the Old and New Testaments contain and express "all thingis necessarie for the instructioun of the Kirk, and to mak the man of God perfite." Into the worship and government of Christ's realm he would have nothing admitted, for which there is

not a heavenly and supernatural sanction ; everything must be fashioned according to the pattern shown in the Mount. If we would be true children of our progenitor, we must see that, first and midst and last, we deduce our faith from the Scriptures.

And the belief of Knox is evangelical. The "Evangel" is, indeed, one of his favourite words ; and, if he does not manifest Martin Luther's positive rapture of delight in the truth that our sinful souls are forgiven by the merits of Jesus Christ alone, he knows as well as his German forerunner that this is the article of a standing or a falling Church. You have not forgotten that his earliest appearance in the fields of literature was as the editor of a little treatise on Justification by Faith, which Henry Balnaves, one of his fellow-prisoners in the French galleys, no "speculative theolog" but a simple layman, had penned. And in the Scots Confession there is something beautiful and touching in the very phraseology, when our Saviour's work and sacrifice are the theme. "The faithfull Fatheris under the law did se the joyfull dayis of Christ Jesus." "He joynit the Godheid and the Manheid baith togidder in ane persone, that the imbecilitie of the ane sould suffer, and be subject to death, quhilk we haid deservit, and the infinite and invincible power of the uther sould tryumphe and purchese till us lyfe, libertie, and perpetuall victorie." "He being the clene and innocent Lamb of God was

dampnit in the presence of an earthlie juge, that we mycht be absolvit befor the tribunall seat of our God." Do we not catch the very cadences of the song of salvation in these definitions of the Gospel? With William Robertson of Irvine, and with all of us who glory in the Cross, John Knox was certain that the Church must drift to shipwreck, if she lose sight of "the great red light of Calvary, and the shining lamp of the Holy Sepulchre of Him who *was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.*"

Moreover, his belief is of the sort which humbles us to the dust and which ascribes the praise to God alone. He is Calvinist, Augustinian, Paulinist, in maintaining that we have destroyed ourselves, and that the Father must choose us to eternal life, the Son must ransom us, the Spirit must regenerate and sanctify our natures, else we shall be for ever undone. "For we are so dead, so blynd and so perverse, that neather can we feill when we ar pricked, see the lycht when it schynes, nor assent to the will of God when it is reveilled." So He must elect us, and He must atone for our sins, and He must preserve us in the way and conduct us to the goal; and apart from Him we can do nothing. A creed this, which kills our pride, and yet which breathes into us a marvellous strength, once we are convinced that the all-sufficient God has set His heart on us and has

enrolled us in His house. Mr. Froude and Mr. Morley have told us in eloquent sentences what adamantine souls it nurtures. How good it will be if, from a more immediate experience, we are discovering its potency and worth !

About John Knox's belief it may be enough to add that it is not cold and formal, but glowing and ardent. Edward Irving—"true friend and tender heart, martyr and saint"—and others, too, have placed the old Scottish Confession above that of the Westminster divines, which has superseded it and rendered it to a large extent antiquated and obsolete. Probably they are mistaken in their preference ; for the later book has a lucidity, a comprehensiveness, and a carefulness of statement to which the earlier can lay little claim. But in one respect the old is better. It is more personal. It is warmer. It is less academic. It comes more swiftly and directly from the innermost being of the men who wrote it down. The scholars of the Jerusalem Chamber have no such affectionate exordium as that which Knox puts in the forefront of his document. "Long have we thirstit, deir Brethren, to haif notifeit unto the warld the summe of that doctrin quhilk we professe, and for the quhilk we haif sustenit infamy and daingear." Is it not the doctrine for which we are prepared to sustain infamy and danger, the doctrine, too, which we thirst to notify to others—is it not this, and solely this, which we really can call



our own, and which we are able to preach with persuasiveness and conquering power ?

Thus Knox summons us to a belief which is reasonable and wise, which is dominated by the Bible, which glories in the Cross of Christ, which abases our self-confidence that it may magnify God's grace, and which flows vital and forceful from the fountain of the heart. The treasure is beyond price. Let us see that in our hands it is not neglected and thrown away.

Next, there is the legacy of his CHURCHMANSHIP.

He was the architect of the Presbyterianism of our country ; although the exposition and the defence of the Presbyterian system were in actual fact the work of Andrew Melville, that great-souled captain who was to lift the flag and carry on the war, when Knox himself had gone from battle to rest. It was he, nevertheless, who pointed the way—he who showed what manner of polity and government the Church of Scotland ought to have.

And here, also, we owe him an incalculable debt.

If the Kirk has been, since the days of the Reformation, the chiefest and sublimest entity in our Scottish realm, watching sedulously over the best interests of the commonwealth, reproving public sin and contending for public godliness, speaking on the people's behalf with a voice royaller and diviner than that of any tyrant on the throne, gaining and conserv-



ing and advancing the liberties of the land, it was Knox who, under God, invested the Kirk with such sacredness and majesty. He was eager to see its various courts established and equipped for their tasks. In particular, he made the General Assembly the true Parliament and Legislature of Scotland ; and, although she has not always fulfilled his hopes and realised his ideals, the student of our history can point to a hundred shining instances when she has *looked forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners*. If, again, the preaching of the Word has had a quite distinctive importance in the worship of our Scottish Church, and has enriched many generations of our Scottish people with a liberal education in the highest and deepest matters, it is to Knox and to those who laboured with him that we must trace this coronation of the pulpit and the sermon. He cannot insist too often on the necessity for “hailsome doctrin,” and for “godlie and learned men” to tell it forth. He cannot abide any “vane schaddow” of a minister. He is not “a dispensatour of Goddis mysteries,” he protests indignantly, “that in no wyise can breke the breid of lyif to the faynting and hungrie saulis.” There is a fashion, even on the Reformer’s side of the Tweed, which would subordinate the sermon to something more ceremonial and liturgical ; but, when we conform to the fashion, we shall have said goodbye to the Kirk, thoughtful, well-instructed, strong,

of which he dreamed and for which he toiled. And if, once more, there are few Churches in the world in which the rights of all the members are so readily acknowledged, and their responsibilities are so effectively taught, it was Knox who helped us to these conceptions of the democratic character of the Kingdom of Heaven. In unison with Luther and Calvin and Zwingli, he shattered the barriers which divided the common man from God; and he published the good news that access to the Holiest of All is no exclusive privilege of the priest, but the glad prerogative of each sinful and needy and thirsting heart. But, perhaps, he went farther than any of them in his assertion of the duties and endowments of the rank and file in the army of Christ. How significant is the chapter, in *The Book of Discipline*, on the weekly Prophesying or Exercise! To it every member ought to come. In it every member, if only he avoids "peregryne and unproffitable questionis," shall have "libertie to utter and declair his mynd and knowlege to the comfort and edificatioun" of all. One may hazard the opinion that the Presbyterian Church, in none of its branches, has made as much as it might have done of the weekly Prophesying and Exercise.

John Knox found room in his Churchmanship for arrangements which were designed to be temporary. Everybody is aware how, in *The Book of Common Order*, he set down prayers which might be used by those responsible for the conduct of the worship in

God's House. But it never was compulsory in the Scottish Kirk to employ these. They were helps, guides, models, rather than prescribed and obligatory forms of devotion. Everybody remembers, too, his institution of Readers and Superintendents, in addition to the Ministers of the Word with whom Presbytery is familiar. But, in that dearth of fully qualified exponents of divine truth which marked a transition time, the Reader's humbler office was very necessary ; and, when so much required to be planned and organised, the Superintendent also had his function, even if he could assert no claim to the pomps and powers of a diocesan Bishop. These are examples, and others might be cited, of devices admirably suited to the exigencies of the hour, but not intended to be crystallised into enduringness and permanence. Do I stray into debateable territory, if I suggest that, in permitting this measured and guarded liberty, in sanctioning these helpful expedients which were meant to pass away when the need for them had ceased, our Reformer showed us a good example? Not everything, either in Church government or in Church doctrine, has equal importance, equal validity, equal abidingness. There are truths and ordinances which are central, and which should be maintained from generation to generation ; there are other truths and ordinances which are circumstantial, and which may be modified and amended as the years go on.

As a Churchman John Knox was both steadfast and elastic ; and I submit that we shall do well to follow him alike in the steadfastness and in the elasticity.

Take it in its best moods and moments, we have no reason to be ashamed, but a host of reasons to be proud, of our national Presbyterianism. Let me quote to you some sentences written by a great Anglican : "*Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna* is the motto for every one whose lot is cast in any portion of Christ's Church. . . . We had our Sparta, a noble, if a rough and an incomplete one ; patiently to do our best for it was better than leaving it to its fate, in obedience to signs and reasonings which the heat of strife might well make delusive." What Dean Church, the worthy son of Hooker and Andrewes and Ken, says of his own spiritual heritage has surely its significance for the sons and daughters of Knox.

I pass on. There is the legacy of his PATRIOTISM.

More than most, he had the *praeferendum ingenium Scotorum* ; and, suffused as it was in his case with the heavenlier passion for the glory of God, it constituted him a patriot of the finest and most ethereal type.

He craved freedom for the land he loved so masterfully. It was not by any means that he was a republican ; he had a natural and a religious reverence for kings and all in authority. But if a ruler was bad, idolatrous, irreligious, forgetful of Christ and of

Christ's little ones, the ruler should have short shrift from him. " 'Think ye,' quod Mary, 'that subjectis having power may resist thair Princes?' 'Yf their Princes exceed thair boundis,' quod he, 'Madam, and do against that whairfoir they should be obeyed, it is no doubt but thei may be resisted, evin by power.' At these wordis, the Quene stood as it war amased, more than the quarter of ane hour. At lenth scho said, 'Weall then, I perceave that my subjectis shall obey you, and not me; and shall do what thei list, and nott what I command; and so man I be subject to thame, and nott thei to me.' 'God forbid,' answered he, 'that ever I tack upoun me to command any to obey me, or yitt to set subjectis at libertie to do what pleaseth thame. Bot my travell is, that boyth princes and subjectis obey God.'" Young Mary Stewart, beautiful, self-willed, brilliant with the hard brilliance of the diamond, determined to act as despotically as she chose, had never heard such treason before. But modern Scotland is the creation of the traitor, whom conscience compelled to speak the truth.

He coveted intelligence, too, for his country. In *The Book of Discipline*,—the book which Professor Mitchell calls "the most thoughtful, judicious, practical, and comprehensive of the documents" of the Reformed Kirk—he and his helpers painted the picture of their Ladder of Learning, from the elementary school in which grammar and Latin and the Catechism should



be taught, through the high school in each notable town with its training in Logic and Rhetoric and the languages, up to the University. Bursaries were to aid the climber, who mounted from step to step of the Ladder. What better service could the nobles of the land fulfil than to seek out and encourage such ardent climbers? "Off necessitie it is that your Honouris be most cairfull for the virtuous educatioun and godlie upbringing of the youth of this Realme, yf eathir ye now thirst unfeanedlie for the advancement of Christis glorie, or yit desire the continewance of his benefits to the generatioun following." The pity is that the picture has not been more completely embodied in fact, and that the Ladder, though many have scaled it, too long remained inaccessible to some who lifted wistful eyes towards its apex and crown.

And Knox desired to see the commonwealth permeated with brotherliness. He had his austerities, his rigours, his side of sternness and severity; he did not find life, as M. Renan found it, "a delightful excursion through reality," a picnic and a *fête*. But under the soldier's harness, and behind the determined face, there must have throbbed a singularly tender heart. It is beautiful to read his anxiety that the poor, always so big a section of society, shall be ministered to and provided for. With "stubburne and idill beggaris," indeed, he has no patience; but he yearns over "personis of honestie fallin into decay and



penuritie," and over "the lauboraris and manuraris of the ground, who, by these creuell beastis the Papistis, have been so oppressit, that thair life to thame has bene dolorus and bitter." He would have "every several Kirk" take the oversight of its own less favoured members. And he waxes fierce against Protestant barons and gentlemen, who have only changed the tyranny of the clergy into the tyranny of the lord or laird; let them know that they will not "escheip Goddis hevy and feirfull judgementis." No philanthropist, no socialist of them all, has championed the cause of the poor more manfully and more lovingly than Knox has done.

Once again, he felt and proclaimed that there can be no prosperity for the State without godliness. "No Commonwealth can flurische or long indure without gude lawis, and scharp executioun of the same." Some of his disciplinary regulations may seem to us, in our later and milder century, too draconian; some of them may be inquisitorial: the regimen is iron rather than silken. But a troublous period needs firmness and strength in its guides even more than it needs "sweet reasonableness." Certainly the ideal of the Reformers was the loftiest. It was to transmute a turbulent country, held for ages in the bondage of ignorance and error and consequent sin, into a Theocracy, a Kingdom of Heaven on the earth. Theirs was the cry of the mystical poet:

Bring me my bow of burning gold,  
Bring me my arrows of desire,  
Bring me my spear—O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire.

I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In Scotland's green and pleasant land.

Our methods may be different ; but it will be fatal if our vision for our fatherland is not identical with the dreams of these heroes and saints.

Dr. Hume Brown has said recently that, "previous to the great religious conflict, there never was an issue before the Scottish people that went deep enough to elicit the instincts and tendencies which must be awakened before what we call a nation becomes possible." The Reformation, he tells us, even more than the War of Independence, first gave birth to the civic and corporate life of our land. This, too, is part of the debt under which we lie to John Knox.

A few sentences will suffice for the last legacy, which is not the least. It is the legacy of his CHARACTER.

The Mediæval virtue and grace of Honour, that peerless quality to which all knightly spirits aspired, has been analysed into four ingredients—courage, compassion, truth, loyalty. Knox, not only a man of

honour but a man of religion—if, for an instant, one may recall Cromwell's famous antithesis—had, deep inwoven into his personal character, these four magnificent essentials.

It is entirely unnecessary to set about proving his courage; it was leonine, unmistakeable: although, when we remember his shrinking backwardness about responding to the call of the St. Andrews' congregation, we feel that the bravery must have been God-given rather than constitutional. His compassion is not so evident, and many refuse to credit him with any "droppings of warm tears"; but we think of the gentleness and patience of his letters to Mrs. Bowes; and we are constrained to own that Mr. Taylor Innes's paradoxical epithet, "the woman-hearted warrior," may not be far amiss. Truth—the enthusiasm for it, the trumpet-toned proclamation of it, "impugn it whoso list," the fight to have it enthroned and obeyed: was it not the breath of his nostrils, and the master-light of all his seeing? And personal loyalty to Christ, Saviour, Keeper, King, controlled and sustained him through the whole of his "long and painful battle." He is much more reticent about the experiences of his soul than Luther; he is almost as silent as Calvin. But, now and then, the veil is lifted. In 1566 he wrote, "with deliberat mynd to his God," a most touching prayer and covenant. "Thow hes sealed into my heart remission of my sinnes," he said in the





*(From a Photograph by A. A. Inglis.)*

course of it, "which I acknowlege and confes myself to have receaved be the precious bloode of Jesus Christ ones shed." And, six years later, when he lay dying in his house at the Netherbow, he bade his wife "Go read where I cast my first anchor;" and she turned to the seventeenth chapter of St. John; and, leaning on the strong consolations of his Lord's mighty and merciful intercession, he went to the presence of Him whom, having not seen, he had loved.

Perhaps there is no legacy, of stimulus and inspiration, of rebuke and help and cheer, like the legacy to be found in the character of a man who has feared God so very much that he has felt no other fear. This supreme gift John Knox has bequeathed to you and me.







Grave of John Knox.  
(Parliament Square, Edinburgh.)











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